

Companion Planting – growing plants in harmony

Many growers, no matter how experienced, will have issues with pests from time-to-time. Pests are creepy crawlies and bugs that nibble at crops before they get established, lay eggs on plants or carry diseases.

Using companion planting helps protect your garden, pots, or balcony plants from pests whilst being kind to the soil, waterways and animals by being pesticide free.

By using nature's clever ecosystem and laws of attraction, we can better support biodiversity. In this resource we explain what companion planting is and guide you through how to match plants to support climate and nature.



What is companion planting?

Companion planting simply means growing two or more different varieties of plant alongside each other to maintain a natural balance in your growing space. It helps to combat pests, prevent diseases and attracts pollinating insects like bees, butterflies and wasps. Companion planting is used by those who want to garden organically, which means without the use of pesticides and harsh chemicals.

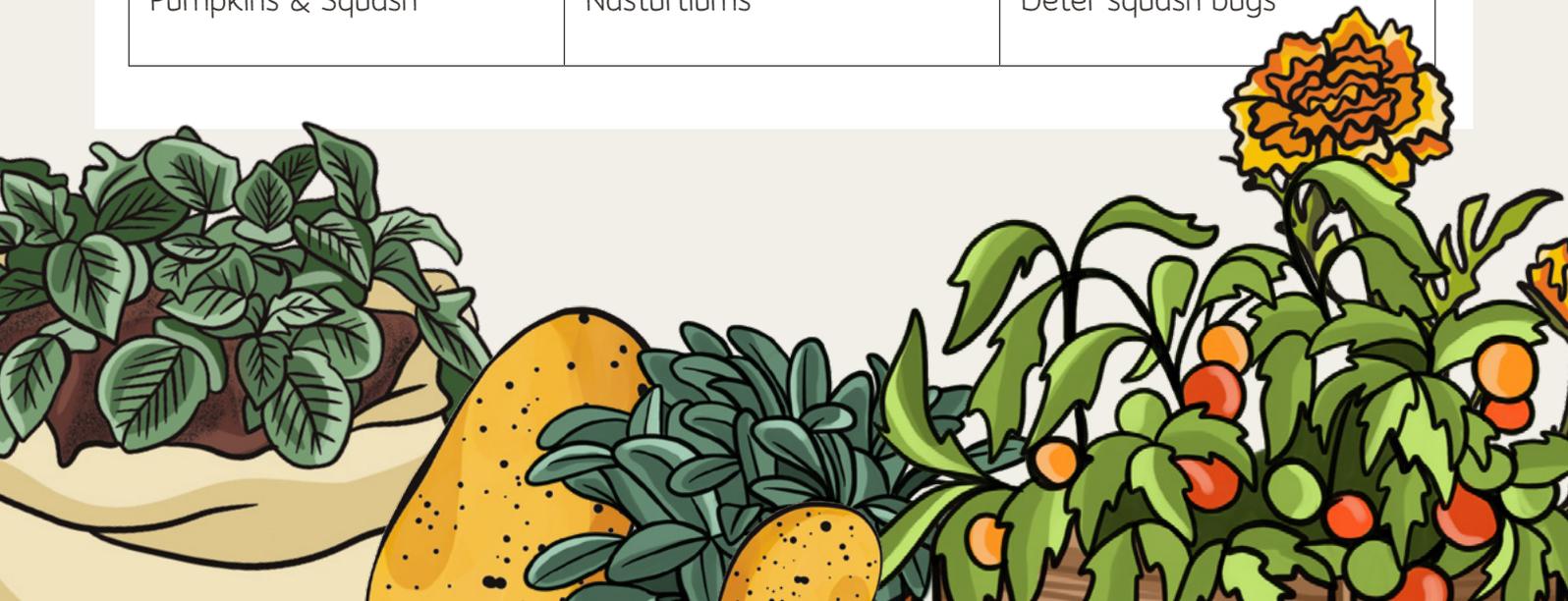
Companion plants are often strongly scented and confuse pests on the hunt for a certain plant to lay eggs on, referred to as a host plant. Other companion plants are attractive

to beneficial insects like ladybirds, which eat aphids, a common plant-damaging bug. It is a simple way to reduce the need for insect sprays and chemicals in the garden. Sprays which kill bugs and plant diseases can also harm the soil. The sprays used seep into the roots and into the ground whilst watering plants and the rain washes surface chemicals onto the soil. This can damage the soil and also harm wildlife.

By using companion planting you can help protect the soil, grow flowers in between your veggies and support pollinators.



Companion 1	Companion 2	Benefit
Aubergines	Basil, French marigolds	Repels flea beetles
Beans	French marigolds	French marigolds repel whitefly and aphids
Broad beans	Nasturtiums, summer savory or corn	All deter blackfly
Cabbages	French marigolds, mint & thyme	Deter cabbage moths
Carrots	Onions, spring onions, leeks, tomatoes	All deter carrot root fly
Potatoes	French marigolds Sage	French marigolds deter eelworms Sage deters flea beetles
Sweetcorn	French marigolds Borage	French marigolds repel whitefly and aphids Borage repels worm pests
Tomatoes	Chives, onions	The onion scent deters aphids
Pumpkins & Squash	Nasturtiums	Deter squash bugs



Hints and tips

Some plants don't like living next to each other, so do your research as some can have the opposite effect and are far from best friends! Don't plant tomatoes with brassicas like cabbages, or cucumbers with potatoes for example – they will compete for the same nutrients.

Did you know that you can wash many bugs off plants using cooled dishwater or water from a water butt.

Rotating crops is also a key way to minimise pests and bugs. It helps control pests and diseases that can become established in the soil over time. Certain plants attract similar pests, so changing what you plant in a pot or bed can alter pest cycles.

Crop rotation has the super benefit of helping keep a variety of vitamins and minerals in the soil, as different plants take out and put in varying amounts of nutrients. Leafy greens like cabbages need lots of nitrogen, while peas and beans add nitrogen. If you grow the same crop in the same place year-after-year the soil gets tired, and this limits plant growth.

Don't worry if some of your companion plants disappear completely! Aphids may well be attracted to a French Marigold and munch it down to the ground but will hopefully leave your main crops alone.

Generate conversation and explore sensory experiences.

- Research about the ancient method of gardening called Three Sisters Gardening, a great history topic that links to pesticide free gardening. What is your understanding of the term organic?
- Discuss the concept of helping each other, like the plants do. Can you recall the last time you helped someone?
- Compare the alternatives to companion planting. What about large-scale agriculture? Could farmers use companion plants?
- Lots of herbs are companion plants, like chives – you could use the Growing Bee Friendly Herbs resource to grow and taste a variety of herbs.

About this resource:

There are more free resources, recipes and more:

fflgettogether.org/get-involved/plant-and-share-toolkit/

foodforlife.org.uk/campaigns

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